

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

June 19, 2020

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Charles E. Schumer
Minority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Speaker Pelosi, Minority Leader McCarthy, Majority Leader McConnell, and Minority Leader Schumer:

We are writing to advocate for the needs of our nation's veterans, transitioning service members, and their families in the next COVID-19 legislative response package. The transition for our service members back to civilian life can be difficult no matter the circumstances. However, particularly during the current coronavirus pandemic, we believe Congress must do everything in our power to support our veterans and transitioning service members, especially by addressing their workforce development, employment, and economic needs.

Veterans' unemployment rates have risen due to COVID-19.¹ During the Great Recession from 2007-2009 studies show that veterans who recently transitioned to civilian life faced higher unemployment rates than both older veterans and non-veterans.² These studies also indicate increased veterans' suicide rates during the Great Recession, tied in part to less economic opportunity. Accordingly, we are concerned that the adverse economic conditions stemming from COVID-19 could cause similar harm to the veterans' community today. Therefore, we believe that additional targeted veterans and transitioning service members' workforce policy improvements are needed across several federal agencies to respond to COVID-19 and to ensure economic stability for the veterans' community in the long-term.

Specifically, we request support for the following:

- GI Bill benefit protections for veterans who are nontraditional students in Registered Apprenticeship and On-the-Job Training programs. These programs are critical career pathways for veterans and transitioning service members, and they have been disproportionately disrupted by COVID-19 because they are more difficult to move to online platforms, making it difficult for enrolled veterans to earn required On-the-Job hours. Congress has already addressed GI Bill benefit protections during COVID-19 for

¹ <https://veterans.house.gov/news/press-releases/chairman-takano-responds-to-rise-in-veteran-unemployment-to-nearly-12-percent>

² https://bobwoodrufffoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/BWF_WhitePaper-COVID19-5.0-Final.pdf

veterans enrolled in higher education. Veterans in apprenticeship and On-the-Job Training programs deserve parity.


- Funding for the Department of Labor's Registered Apprenticeship Program (RAP) for veterans. RAP programs provide paid, work- and classroom-based educational opportunities for veterans, resulting in the earning of an industry-recognized credential. Additional funding for RAP will provide additional veterans with immediate skills and employment opportunities, designed to fit industry needs.
- Increasing access for veterans and transitioning service members to additional skilled training programs and related supportive services. In addition to RAP, we also advocate that resources be provided to the following entities that provide high-quality, proven career pathways for veterans and transitioning service members: veterans service organizations (VSOs), state-level workforce development agencies, the Department of Defense's (DoD) SkillBridge initiative, the U.S. Military Apprenticeship Program (USMAP), and community colleges.
- Recognizing veterans' service-connected skills through enhancements to our existing credentialing system. Service members leave the military with an incredible amount of education and skills. We must ensure federal and state licensing bodies better understand and can translate veterans' experiences, so that they can more quickly put their training to work in our communities.

We appreciate your leadership and the work you have done through initial legislative packages to support our veterans and our country during this challenging time. We urge you to take the steps outlined in this letter in the next COVID-19 response package to support our veterans, transitioning service members, and their families as they navigate the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. Thank you in advance for your consideration, and we look forward to working with you on these issues.

Sincerely,



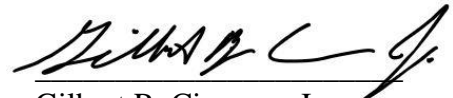
Conor Lamb
Member of Congress



Brian Fitzpatrick
Member of Congress



Jimmy Panetta
Member of Congress



Gilbert R. Cisneros, Jr.
Member of Congress



Ed Case
Member of Congress



Susie Lee
Member of Congress

/s/ _____

Josh Harder
Member of Congress



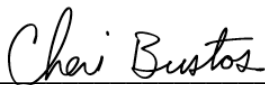
Elaine Luria
Member of Congress



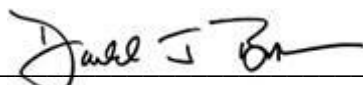
Brian Mast
Member of Congress



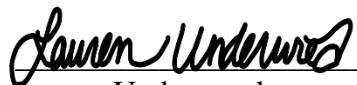
Cindy Axne
Member of Congress



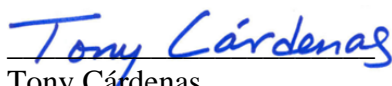
Cheri Bustos
Member of Congress



Don Bacon
Member of Congress



Lauren Underwood
Member of Congress



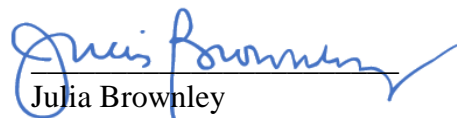
Tony Cardenas
Member of Congress



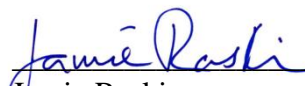
Mike Doyle
Member of Congress

/s/ _____

André Carson
Member of Congress



Julia Brownley
Member of Congress



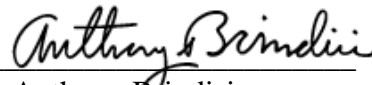
Jamie Raskin
Member of Congress

/s/ _____

James P. McGovern
Member of Congress



Haley M. Stevens
Member of Congress



Anthony Brindisi
Member of Congress



Kathleen M. Rice
Member of Congress

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Jared F. Golden". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line underneath it.

Jared Golden
Member of Congress